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CHANDRAHÁSA

OR

THE LORD OF THE FAIR FORGER

A HINDU DRAMA

BY

K. KRISHNA RAU, B. A.,

of the Provincial Civil Service.

Third Edition.

Madras

SRINIVASA, VARADACHARI & Co.

TRIPPLICANE AND ESPLANADE

1903

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~~1827~~

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~~1827~~

To
J. W. Best Esquire,

WHO,

AS A DISTRICT JUDGE AND A HIGH COURT JUDGE
IN THE PRESIDENCY OF MADRAS

AND

AS THE CHIEF JUDGE OF THE CHIEF COURT OF MYSORE,
WON THE HIGHEST ESTEEM IN BOTH THE PROVINCES,

THIS DRAMA

IS,

WITH PERMISSION,

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

NOT ONLY AS AFFORDING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR EXPRESSING

GRATITUDE FOR PAST KINDNESS,

BUT ALSO BECAUSE HE WAS THE FIRST TO APPRECIATE THE WORK

ON ITS FIRST APPEARANCE,

AND TO RECOGNISE ITS ADAPTABILITY TO BE BROUGHT

ON THE STAGE IN INDIA.

PREFACE.



THIS little drama is founded on the Kanarese version of the Jaimini Bhārata. The author has omitted to represent the earlier parts of the story, and introduced some new scenes, altering the plot as it approaches the conclusion, in accordance with his view of the exigencies of the stage. It may nevertheless be said, with reference to this work, that the process of eliminating the improbable has not been carried on far enough, and that the last scenes, even in their present form, are likely to interfere with the dramatic effect of the play. Such criticism cannot always be avoided in the case of an Eastern Tale.

It is necessary to add that the writer has here and there availed himself of the expressions, and even the ideas, of some popular English authors.

His aim has not been high. A few months ago, some Hindu school-boys wished to give a dramatic performance in English. Excellent British Plays were at hand, but had to be given up for the sole reason that they required European costumes in which a Hindu generally looks very queer. An esteemed Educational Officer then requested the author to put a Puranic story in a form fit for the stage.

What was accordingly written for that occasion is now presented to the public.

The author regrets the shortcomings which must have attended this attempt of his to write a Hindu play in the English language. He thinks it necessary therefore to ask the reader to overlook any faults of execution, and to seek rather to be satisfied with contemplating the chequered life of an ancient Indian Monarch, whose memory is cherished with affection by Hindus even at the present day, and of whom, it may well be said, in the words of Goldsmith,

“The good man suffers but to gain,
And every virtue springs from pain:
As aromatic plants bestow
No spicy fragrance while they grow,
But crushed, or trodden to the ground,
Diffuse their balmy sweets around.”



PROLOGUE.

No scenes inspired by Muses that delight
To dwell upon Parnassus' glorious height,
Or in the tuneful groves of Italy,
Or by the purling streams of Albion free,
Are here presented to your curious eyes.
The imaginative East our theme supplies.
The hero of our tale first saw the light
In that romantic country, once the site
Of Varun's¹⁾ noisy sleep,²⁾ but famous since
For palm-groves, damsels,³⁾ and a model Prince.⁴⁾
Right royal were the ruddy drops that danced
In Chandrahása's veins. But so it chanced

1) The god of the waters, or the Hindu Neptune.

2) The country of Kerala, including the modern State of Travancore, is believed to have been reclaimed from the sea by Parashuráma in a miraculous way. Chandráhása was born in Kérala.

3) See Dr. H. H. Wilson's *Málati and Mádhava*, Act VI:

"As pallid as the cheek
Of the fair dames of Kérala, who mourn
Their absent lords."

Wilson adds the following note:—"They are often alluded to in this strain, and it is to be supposed, therefore, that the women of this province are of a fairer complexion than usual in India."

4) That this is no mere figure of Speech will be felt by all who have been watching the career of the present accomplished Ruler of Travancore.

That, ere three moons had spent themselves, this child
Became an orphan. Tossed by Fortune wild,
He wandered forth from strange to stranger lands,
Caressed or spurned by ever-changing hands.
In Kuntala, his lovely form dispelled
Peace from a mind which with ambition swelled.
How did the villain scheme against his foe ?
Did he succeed in plunging him in woe ?
Or was he overwhelmed himself, like one
Who enviously spits at the midday sun ?
Doth Triumph wait on goodness and on truth ?
And doth the course of true Love e'er run smooth
On Indian soil ? These queries haply may
Be solved upon your witnessing this play,
Wherein you, like celestial swans, may choose
The glittering pearls, and meaner stuff excuse.



PERSONS REPRESENTED.

KING OF KUNTALA.

DUSHTABUDDHI, *Minister of Kuntala.*

MADANA, *Son of Dushtabuddhi.*

GÁLAVA, *Priest to the King of Kuntala.*

KHARAKA, *a Servant of Dushtabuddhi.*

A PRIEST, *Worshipper at Chandiká's Temple.*

KULINDA, *Prince of Chandanávali, a tributary State to Kuntala.*

CHANDRAHÁSA, *Foster-son of Kulinda.*

SUSHENA, *an Envoy sent from Chandanávali to Kuntala, with tribute.*

A PEON.

A COOLIE (*laborer*).

QUEEN OF KUNTALA.

CHAMPAKAMÁLINI, *Daughter of the King of Kuntala.*

VILÁSINI, *Maid to Champakamálini.*

VISHAYÁ, *Daughter of Dushtabuddhi.*

KAMALÁ, *Maid to Vishayá.*

Two DEVILS.

Subjects, Officers and Servants.



CHANDRAHÁSA

A HINDU DRAMA.

ACT I.

Scene I. *Kuntala.*—*A veranda of Dushtabuddhi's house.*

Enter KHARAKA and SUSHENA.

Kharaka. As the envoy from Chandanávati, you are welcome to Kuntala.

Sushena. Thank you, Kharaka.

Kh. I have been expecting guests to-day, ever since I heard a crow cawing ominously from my master the Prime Minister's kitchen-roof this morning.

Su. I am glad to hear that even your birds are such good soothsayers.

Kh. Why, nothing in the world ever happens without some premonitory sign of its approach, which, to an expert, is full of meaning. It was only the other day that my master and myself were on our way to the King's palace, when we encountered a married woman coming from the opposite direction with a pot full of water. What do you

think was the result? A few minutes afterwards, down came a friend to me, and invited me to a rich banquet; and my master, at that very interview, was presented by the Sovereign with a pair of shawls, in recognition of the policy recommended by him with reference to your country.

Su. Whatever may be the virtue of the woman with the water-pot, Chandanávatí, as a tributary state, is grateful for the interest shown in her both by your master and your King; and I am, on the present occasion, sent by my Prince to express his deep obligations to them both.

Kh. I hope you had a pleasant journey?

Su. Very pleasant indeed! Only the weather was rainy and the streets muddy; our animals would not walk and our men stood still. However, we used entreaties to the beasts and blows to the men, with capital result. For we cleared the one hundred and fifty miles between this and Chandanávatí in about nine hundred and fifty hours.

Kh. You started on a Friday, I suppose.

Su. Yes. But what of that?

Kh. Why, that accounts for your difficulties on the way. A journey commenced on a Friday towards the South is the most foolish thing one can be guilty of.

Su. But when will you be able to introduce me to the Prime Minister?

Kh. Let me see (*counting on the fingers*). You must

wait. Now is the Moon riding on the neck of *Leo*, and I would rather see somebody die, than announce you at such an inauspicious hour. Your interview with *Dushtabuddhi* must take place by and by.

Su. What do you expect me to do in the meanwhile? My time is precious.

Kh. We can talk, *Sushena*. There is nothing like using one's gifts, and one of the best of those is the gift of the gab, which you doubtless possess, though in an inferior degree.

Su. Inferior? To whom am I inferior in that respect?

Kh. Guess. One, two, three—

Su. To yourself, do you mean?

Kh. No, no, try again.

Su. I cannot tell.

Kh. To your own mother-in-law.

Su. My mother-in-law? Have you the honor of her acquaintance?

Kh. No, but I am sure she is eloquent.

Su. Your reason?

Kh. Partiality is the rule all over the universe.

Su. I do not understand you.

Kh. Then tell me, is not your mother-in-law a woman?

Su. How shall I answer such a stupid question?

Kh. Just as you please. You are at liberty to deny it, and say she is a man.

Su. Well, I'll admit it. What then ?

Kh. What do you think is the sex of Brahina's wife ?

Su. Your grandmother's, if I am not mistaken.

Kh. You are right. I only regret you, politicians, are not straightforward, and must use *ifs*.

Su. How do you apply my answers to prove your argument that partiality is the universal rule ?

Kh. Tell me, is not Brahma's wife the goddess of speech ?

Su. She is. But still I do not understand you. Do you mean to say, because a female deity presides over the department of the tongue, that she is therefore more liberal in her gifts to women than to us ?

Kh. Exactly so ; and there is another reason why our women's stock of words is not soon exhausted.

Su. What is that ?

Kh. Fancy two buckets with unequal holes at the bottom. Which of them will become empty first ?

Su. The bucket with the larger hole.

Kh. Just so. Your nasty masculine throat has such a big opening in it, that your whole voice comes out at once by the time that a woman would seem to be only about to begin.

Su. Well, I have humoured you so far by listening to your idle talk. In the plenitude of your wisdom, is it time to see *Dushtabuddhi* yet ?

Kh. Not yet. Did you not observe how a leaf from an adjoining tree has just dropped towards my left? For a Bráhmaṇ like myself, not to mind these indications of evil is very sinful.

Su. (*Aside*) I can see what this fellow wants. He probably thinks he will get something out of me.—

Kharaka, what is your idea of sin?

Kh. Love of money is the root of all sin, as is declared by Manu. I therefore advise you to part with your wealth, whenever you see an opportunity.

Su. Will you then ease me of this little portion of the root of sin?

[*Offering money.*]

Kh. You tempt me? Are you trying to corrupt me? How wicked the world is! I am sorry you try to bribe a Bráhmaṇ, and put your money here, sir, here into this pocket. (*Holds up the pocket, and money is put in.*) So you have forced the purse upon me. What shall I do? I should very much like to throw away the money. But I will refrain, lest I pollute my fingers by touching it. I have a great mind to make you feel my displeasure. But for this time, I shall only fine you this amount.

Su. It is a punishment, Kharaka, which suits both our purposes.

Kh. I have twenty other reasons, sir, for keeping the money with me just now.

Su. What are they ?

Kh. Two wives and eighteen children. But you have been standing a long while. Shall I order a seat for you ?

Su. You need not trouble yourself, Kharaka. Can I have an interview with the Prime Minister now ?

Kh. By all means. I am not for delay. But pray, do not think that a full pocket has had any thing to do with my present behaviour.

Su. I don't know.

Kh. Money is mere trash, and I am too old not to have found that out.

Su. But it seems to me that the magnitude of a man's love of the trash is generally in inverse proportion to the number of days he may reasonably expect to live upon the earth. Perhaps old men believe that they will soon want funds to begin the next world with.

Kh. Don't put any uncharitable constructions upon my conduct. I choose this time for introducing you, because you wish it. The more refined schools of astrology declare that "when the mind is fully bent upon doing a thing, it must be done at once ; for that is the time ordained for it, and the moon and stars smile upon the hour."

Su. I thank you for this very convenient text.

Kh. I must, however, ask you beforehand a few questions concerning your visit and the affairs at Chandanávati.

If the Prime Minister should want any information from me, I would not disgrace my position by appearing not to possess it myself. Is your Prince Kulinda's reign as peaceful and happy as ever?

Su. It is the misfortune of you, gentlemen in high places, never to be posted up with the latest intelligence. You seldom know of a man's birth until he has been thirty years in the grave.

Kh. Why, friend, has anything extraordinary happened in Chandanávati lately?

Su. Haven't you heard that the old order has all changed in my country? Progress is the word with us now, and Chandrahása is our presiding deity.

Kh. And who, pray, is Chandrahása?

Su. The son of Kulinda.

Kh. No! Is not Kulinda's wife issueless? I cannot believe you, unless you mean to say that we are still in the age of miracles, and that a piece of mango, eaten by an old lady with due ceremony, can produce any number of children, without any more trouble.

Su. No, Kharaka. I am not going to give you any pieces of mango or jack fruit. The plain fact is, that the boy was found in a jungle, and is in every way a marvel. During his education, he would weary out five teachers at a time, and drink in knowledge as a sponge does water. As

Engel

soon as he grew up to man's estate, he began breaking the necks of his enemies, just as an impatient drunkard, who has not got a corkscrew, knocks the necks off the bottles.

Kh. So, then, Chandrahása has served his apprenticeship in the art of conquering as well as of ruling men ?

Su. Yes, and was entrusted by his foster-father with the reins of government, after he returned with booty from the countries adjoining Chandanávati. Part of the spoil he has now sent as the customary tribute to your King and Minister.

Kh. What are the articles you have brought, may I hear?

Su. There is bullion incalculable; wild beasts and tame animals; damsels, some of whom may be classed with the former, and others with the latter; precious stones, sufficient to build temples with, if you only had architects who would not deal with the jewels like the ape in the fable; coaches and palanquins, with wise drivers and bearers, and wanting only fools to use them.

Kh. You are at liberty to be facetious. Go on.

Su. I have brought you a rare pumpkin. Cut off the top and hollow it; and then, you and your wives, your great-grandfather and grandmother, and the intermediate generations may all be seated in it, and cross the biggest ferry in Kuntala without trouble.

Kh. That must be a wonderful pumpkin. I am only afraid my grandmother won't trust herself in it on the water. What next?

Su. There is also a young elephant whose tusks have been made into beautiful paper-knives. You have only to produce an uncut volume before the animal, and he will return you the book, after carefully cutting every one of its leaves. I will tell you something else about it, only you need not repeat it elsewhere. When the operation is finished, he will give you a full abstract of the contents of the volume in your own mother-tongue.

Kh. Indeed! Then he must be the great-grandchild of the elephant of the Purána, whose articulate prayers are said to have rescued him from the gripe of the crocodile. Anything else of special interest?

Su. I am in charge of a large quantity of diamond powder for your Prime Minister. It will serve a variety of purposes. If you make fireworks out of it, one grain will illumine half the sky for three quarters of an hour. You can also use the powder for making first-class curries, to be served at the banquets of Bráhmans like yourself.

Kh. Nice curry-powder, indeed, which will send the guests over to the majority without allowing them time for preparation. But let us be off. My master will, I think, be ready to receive you now.

Su. As you please. I think, that whoever had the honor of giving you your name,¹⁾ discharged his duty honestly.

[*Exeunt.*]

Scene II. *Kuntala.—A chamber in Dushtabuddhi's house.*

Enter DUSHTABUDDHI.

Dus. Sweet are the charms of power unlimited.
What though I was not to the purple born,
Nor e'en my-lorded from my boyhood up,
Yet my kind stars have made amends for this.
Of Kuntala, I have been virtual king,
Though only styled the minister-in-chief.
My master, loath to take part in the toils
Of empire, yields to me the sovereign sway.
So far, so good. But there's one point behind,
That still has cost me many a sleepless night.
The splendour which I own and shed around,
Is, like the pale moon's, borrowed from another,
And lacks the charm of perpetuity.
Oh for the glory that surrounds a throne,
And lifts the occupant, as if by magic,
To heights that seem appropriate to the gods.
From their exalted station he beholds,

¹⁾ *Khara*, in Sanskrit, means an ass.

How, chiefly for his pleasure and behoof,
Submissive Earth brings forth her choicest fruits,
Or thousands sweat to draw them from her womb.
He need but cast his royal glance, and straight,
The object withers or obtains new life.
His sports assume the garb of solemn work,
And serious work is made as light as play.
When, after long enjoyment, he must change
His earthly for a heavenly crown, his soul
Groans not beneath the hindering weight of care,
That he must leave his dearest offspring here,
Less blest perhaps than he himself had been.
But can such happiness as this be mine?
And may I realize a life-long dream?
My bosom gleams with hope. I see the path
That ought to lead my offspring to the throne.
The omens are propitious to this end.
The King, whose sand of life is well-nigh spent,
Is certain not to leave an heir behind;
For Champaká, his only child, is barred,
By our convenient laws, from ruling o'er
Her father's country. What shall happen then?
The distance is not great, that separates
A Premier from his King. Why then shall I
Not aim at royalty and all its glory,

And hold it in the persons of my sons?
It shall be mine. Nothing like energy,
That hitherto has helped me up the ladder,
All but the highest step, and still shall help me on.
I'm not for virtue famous. Hang that name,
That maudlin sentiment, unprofitable,
That plea of weakness and base cowardice.
When, years ago, the Bráhmans, wise and pure,
Were, after a rich banquet, pouring forth
A few of their vague blessings on my head,
And one of them, who read the future fates,
Or feigned to do so, told me that a child,
A vagrant, whose ambition was a meal,
Would one day rule this country, did I not,
By secret orders, get that child improved
From off the surface of the earth, to which
He seemed a needless burden? O my genius!
Thou wilt support me on emergency,
And help, with thy resources, to remove
Each barrier betwixt the throne and me.
Of piety, I'll borrow but the cloak,
Feed Bráhmans at the State's expense, that they
May pray for my success against the state.
Mild shall be my exterior like the snake's,
That creeps and bites, and no more tumult makes.

Enter KHARAKA and SUSHENA.

Well, Kharaka, what news?

Kh. I come to inform your Lordship that this gentleman brings to you and the King a tribute from the Prince of Chandanávati.

Dus. I see Chandanávati has ever been our most loyal feudatory. The things she sends us are usually very rare and very valuable.

Kh. Whatever may have been your opinion about previous years, I have no doubt that, as regards this year, your Lordship will lack words to express your approbation. I have just feasted my eyes with a look at the articles, and in sober truth, if you rummaged the continent over a radius of five hundred miles, you could not secure, either for love or money, a more desirable addition to your collection.

Dus. I am glad you can report so favorably on the tribute. I hence presume that Kulinda is prospering. May he long enjoy a government to which, unhappily, he has no heirs.

Kh. I beg your Lordship's pardon. We only pity him through ignorance. Sushena, my friend here, informs me that Kulinda has fostered a son whose wisdom is the boast of Chandanávati, and through whose valour the rarities just received by us have been acquired.

Dus. Is it possible, Sushena?

Su. Most true, my Lord.

Dus. Then were he and Kulinda
Sprung from a common stock ?

Su. Oh no, my Lord.
Before adoption they were no more kin,
Than is a diamond to a pearl.

Dus. Tell me,
Where did the good Kulinda dig or dive
For this child-jewel ?

Su. Nay, it was picked up
Above-ground. On a lucky day it chanced
That, true to custom, our chase-loving Prince
Had the thick forest beaten for its game,
But not a tiger, bison or a boar,
Fleeing for life, did gladden his quick eye,
Until, at last, a spotted deer appeared,
And soon became the quarry of pursuit.
Fleeter than wind, he, with a thousand turns,
Slipped from the Prince's hounds, and stole away,
Reckless of scratches, through a maze of thorns.
The impatient Prince, upon his fiery steed,
Followed his nimble prey for many a mile,
But, heated in the sun, was on the point
Of giving up the bootless chase, when lo !
The hunted beast stopped suddenly, and turned,
And looking wistfully towards his foe,

Seemed to invite him to a greater joy
Than would be got by dipping his keen shaft
In harmless blood. The huntsman's heart was touched.
Dropping his arms, dismounting from his horse,
He hastens to the spot with curious eyes.
Low plaintive moans, mixed with the glorious name
Of Vishnu, oft proceeding from the copse,
Attract the Prince's ears; he steps inside,
And there, upon the ground, he sees a child
Of four short summers. Thus this jewel bright
Was found within the jungle.

Dus. Found, say you?

Su. Yes, good my Lord, some sixteen years ago.

Dus. What! Sixteen years ago? A perfect child?

Su. As perfect, sir, as one could wish it were,
Except that Nature, seeming, in a sense,
Too generous, had given to the boy
A toe too much, which had been cut away
By ruffian hands.

Dus. (*Aside.*) My mind misgives me quite.
May it be he?—(*To Sus.*) Go on, I'll hear the whole.

Su. Whether 'twas but the love of symmetry,
Or some ulterior motive that had led
The knave to leave the young child, with his foot
Bleeding, in such a place, I cannot tell.

But certain is it that he did the child
The greatest good. For by his heartless act,
The boy was rid of a tremendous curse
That seemed to hang upon his fortunes then.

Dus. (Aside.) Oh, my suspicions seem well-founded.—

(To Sus.) Well!

Tell me, in what condition was the child?

Su. I never can forget the touching scene.
As we approached it close behind our Prince,
The beasts and birds, that are the dread of forests,
Which then appear to have been keeping guard,
Withdrew from where the child lay moaning still.
We fancied that the Spirit of the wood
Had taught them all to let their fierceness sleep,
And vie, with the more gentle animals,
In doing him the kindest offices.
Who would not do the like and more unto
That masterpiece of Nature, rudely thrown
By human fiends upon that dreadful spot?

Dus. (Aside.) The fellow seems to chide me for the past,
Although he means it not.—*(To Sus.)* What followed next?

Su. The rest is briefly told. Kulinda's joy
At finding this great treasure knew no bounds.
His wife, who felt that Fortune was more kind
To her than nature, nursed with love the boy,

Who quickly changed his cries for witching smiles
 That graced his moonlike face, and hence his name
 Of CHANDRAHÁSA.¹⁾ Nurture and good training
 Have supplemented Nature, making him
 A credit to the State he's born to rule.

Dus. Is not this praise a trifle o'er the mark ?

Su. Oh no, my Lord. 'Tis a delight to mark
 How, like an able pilot, he directs
 The ship of state, with all its aged crew,
 And hopeless passengers, through rocks and storms
 That menace order in the commonwealth.
 Upon the bloody battle-field, he looks,
 In winning, like the God of War on earth,
 And having won, in mercy he displays
 A moderation, sir, which makes two-fold
 The glory of success. In Shástrás²⁾ too,
 'Twill glad your heart to hear him once unfold,
 In language sweeter than a well-writ novel,
 The mysteries of Nature, Man and God,
 Themes whose abstruseness drove the sages old
 First into hostile camps, and afterwards
 To solitudes in sheer bewilderment.
 Knowledge, again, has not destroyed his faith.

1) In Sanskrit, *Chandra* means moon, and *hása*, smile.

2) Hindu scientific books.

Unlike the shallow fools who vainly think
 Their learning justifies them in free-thought,
 He stands a pillar of the ancient creed.
 And his is no mere lip-deep piety.
 His frequent jubilees of true devotion,
 His chanting of the Vedic¹⁾ hymns and prayers,
 And the fortnightly fasts, kept solemnly
 By him, as by his cheerful people, lend
 A charm to Chandanāvati, which shines,
 At all these times, like Vishnu's capital.

Dus. (Aside.) I can't hear any more.—

(To Sus.)

Well-done! Convey

My warm congratulations to your Prince,
 My friend. *(To Kharaka.)* And Kharaka, bestow your care
 In showing all meet hospitality
 To him and to his followers. Farewell!

[Exeunt KHARAKA and SUSHENA.]

Found in the wilderness! A pretty boy,
 But four years old! His extra toe cut off!
 And thriving at our tributary's now!
 'Tis he, 'tis he, whom, by my stern commands,
 The ruffian had ta'en out to be killed.
 Did he play false? I hope not. Yet why hope?
 'Tis foolish to expect fidelity

¹⁾ *Vedas* are the scriptures of the Hindus.

From one whose trade is murder. Oh! how glad
Felt I when that my delegate returned
With the one toe, in token that he had
Got rid of that same little one whose life
Promised to be a stumbling-block to mine.
The starry science no delusion seems.
And learned Bráhmans, that can read a face,
Or can decipher lines upon the palm,
Have, of this quondam beggar-boy, foretold
Enough to make me sad. But must this be?
Astrologers may wrongly calculate;
And palmistry may still be misapplied.
And who knows if the pale-cheeked stars may not
Feel themselves palsied in their influence
By a bold stroke of a determined mind?
What though my first attempt was, through deceit,
Baulked of its prey, I yet will try a chance,
And dread no interference, God's or man's.

[Exit.



ACT II.

Scene I. *Kuntala.*—An apartment in the King's Palace.

Enter KING and QUEEN.

King. Dear Queen, I grieve with thee, we have no son.
But then, what boots it so to rail at Fate?

Queen. To us, she has been step-dame, gentle Lord,
And, in her malice, she has ta'en from us
The joy of bringing up a tender boy,
The fruit of our own bodies, whose sweet smiles,
Though speechless, might to us appear a heaven;
Who, in his lisping days, would straight appoint
His little playmates as his ministers,
Would make the kitchen his great battle-field,
And kill his foes, all dolls, in mimic strife;
Whose bosom, warm with filial love, would prove
The staff and stay of our declining years;
Who, at our grassy bed,¹⁾ all bathed in tears,
Would stoop to catch faint accents of farewell,
Would do our will, with holy reverence,
And teach our souls, by sage-commanded rites,
To tread the blissful paths that lead to heaven.
Alas! this happiness can ne'er be ours;

¹⁾ Among Hindus, some persons, when at the point of death, are made to lie down upon sacred grass strewn upon the floor.

And we invoke, where'er our lot is known,
A sigh of pity which is more unwelcome
Than all the world's ungenerous scorn would be.

King. Fate is capricious everywhere on earth.
The sons of want, whose very honey-moon
Has known no better bed than the hard floor
Beside the smoky oven, who, rising up
Morn after morn, stir forth, like birds, to meet
The question where to get their daily meal,
E'en these, whose very front proclaims distress,
Have numerous offspring; while the titled ones,
Rolling in luxury, and growing fat
Through lack of care, who would give crores away
To holy devotees, supposed to cure
Sterility by charms and amulets,
These protégés of fortune do not share
The blessing of a single child.

Queen. My Lord,
A sonless home is but a dreary waste.
'Tis no more cheering than a crystal lake
Whose bosom bears not the fine lotus-buds;
Or than the azure field of stars, whose face
Shows not the silver moon's resplendent orb;
Or than the beauty of sweet seventeen,
Brimming with life, with grace in every limb,

Who nightly must retire to her cold room
To mourn the wretchedness of single state.

King. But we must thank our gracious stars, my dear,
That they have blessed us with a lovely girl.
'Tis said, and I believe, 'tis rightly said,
A son's a son till he get him a wife;
A daughter is a daughter through her life.
What joy our Champaká has been to us!
How often have we feasted these our eyes
As she did play the little house-wife here?
How often has the music of her voice,
That seemed to linger in our raptured ears
Long after she had done, made us forget
The hardness of our lot?

Queen. But then, my Lord,
She is a borrowed jewel. She must off
When we have got a proper partner for her.
When she has left, this mansion must revert
To its old state, and wear a desolate look.
The other day when she obtained our leave
For but two hours to go and see her friend,
Young Vishayá, the Premier's daughter fair,
Did you not ask me, half a dozen times,
If Champaká had not returned? Then say,
If we can ever bear her long, long stay
Out of our sight, and in her husband's home.

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. His Lordship the Prime Minister is come,
And seeks an interview.

King. Show him up here.

[*Exit SERVANT.*

King. Thy words, my dear, have touched my very heart.
Our Champaká and we ought not to part
So long as we remain upon the earth;
And she shall wed a youth of noble birth,
Who can afford in Kuntala to stay,
And to reign after me.

Queen. Be't as you say.
We ought to make the best of a bad lot.
The Premier comes, and tarry must I not.

Exit.

Enter DUSHTABUDDHI.

Dus. (*Aside.*) Luck! Luck! I've gleaned new matter
to muse on
Now from the King's lips. But this by and by.
(*To the King.*) My humblest salutations to my liege.

King. I am glad to see you, good my Minister.
How goes my kingdom?

Dus. Quite as smooth, my liege,
As the deep waters of a pebbled brook,
Whose bosom is not ruffled by the gale.

Our late offending foes have been so crushed
That others of more caution and more power
Are kept in dread, as are the timorous mice
Of the eight-footed Sharabha.¹⁾ At home,
Humanity and truth do so adorn
The breasts and tongues of subjects, that we now
Seem almost to approach the golden age,
When to a contract of the greatest import,
The sun was held to be sufficient witness,
And when the moon and stars were deemed to be
Police efficient to restrain the deeds
That were too black to see the light of day.

King. How does Kulinda, our great vassal-Prince?

Dus. 'Tis twenty years, my liege, since I could snatch
A single week out of my crowded time,
To take a trip to Chandanāvati;
And then the things there were indifferent.
We have been trying since, by all such means
As distance doth permit, to guide the Prince
In governing aright. But what the fruits
Of our advice have been, we cannot know.

King. Fear you that aught amiss has happened there?

Dus. I do not know exactly what to think.
Kulinda has just sent his tribute in.

¹⁾ A fabulous animal.

It so exceeds in richness all the stores
Which we in former years received from him,
That something, I suspect, is rotten there.
Our ripe experience in the wordly ways
Bids us presume that people only bring
Such rare and costly gifts when thus they hope
To hide their rogueries more lucrative.
We can't say here what subjects he has bled,
What friendly potentates he has subdued,
To hoard the wealth, of which he gives away
A part to us, that it may stand between
Our watchful eyes and his blameworthy acts.

King. What course do you propose, good Minister?

Dus. So please your Highness, I will thither go,
And satisfy myself if all is right.

King. Well, do so quickly, and let Madana,
Your worthy son, supply your place with us. [*Exit.*

Dus. Now have I prospered better than I hoped.
I've made Kulinda seem a very devil,
Although I know he rules his country well,
And only did, through his fame-covered son,
The first great duty of a warrior-Prince,
Conquest of hostile principalities;
And I'm to go and do what pleases me.
But what was that I overheard the king

To say, as I awaited audience ?

He said, and no mistake, that Champaká
Shall wed a youth who can afford to stay
In Kuntála and to reign after him.

Well ! Here's a prospect for my son indeed !
And Madana may surely keep those terms,
And thank his Royal Master too. 'Tis good.
A mighty kingdom and a damsel fair,
Both at one stroke, is no unpleasant job.
My son is well-esteemed here by the King.
He just now called him worthy. Did he not ?
My life's great hopes may thus be realised,
If I but guide the progress of events.
I only fear my son is dull and cold,
Too dull to dream of empire within reach,
Too frosty to be melted by the charms
Of Champaká. I'll lead him step by step.
And first of all, I'll go and try to land him
Upon the edge of Cupid's rosy realms.

[*Exit.*

Scene II. Kuntála.—An apartment in Dushlabuddhi's house.

Enter DUSHTABUDDHI and MADANA.

Mad: I fear my shoulders are too weak, my sire,
To bear the weight of this whole empire's care.

Dus. No rose without it thorns, my Madana.
Of greatness, if one wish to taste the sweets,
One ought to bear the burdens too. Thou'lt find,
The higher one rises in the scale of power,
The less is usually the drudgery.
To enter is no light task. But once in,
Tax all thy skill to be immoveable.
Part never with the all-important power
Of choosing thine own men for offices:
He rules a kingdom who the rulers rules.
Sweet be thy speech whene'er it well may be;
One should talk sugar, though with none to give.
This doubles favors, and doth take away
The sting of a refusal. Be thou prompt
In matters pleasant or indifferent.
Procrastination is the rule of fools,
Who think and think of twenty thousand things,
All at one time, and come to no result;
And who, at prayers, at meals, and when they press
The uneasy pillows, feel the curse it is
To bear a head more hopelessly confused
Than is a lumber-room. Then, with the King,
Appear all frankness and obedience.
Let his commands seem thy long cherished wishes
E'en though thou inly burn on hearing them.

The more thou aim'st at power, parade the less.
Be not a sleeping fox; but ever take
Occasion by the hand, that thou mayst thrive.

Mad. Thy precepts, father, do I highly prize.
But then I fail to see the need of them,
When, as it seems, your absence will be brief.

Dus. True, but I cannot last for ever, son.
Death has sent in his harbingers to me
In these my silver hairs, and I shall place
My charge soon in thy hands.

Mad. That day be far
When any dire mishap should fall on you.
What will become of us, when you are gone?
A minister I am not fit to be.
A candied tongue, and yet a wormwood heart
Is not a natural gift which I possess.
I'd rather quit my post, my rank, my wealth,
Than sign my name to a portentous scroll
That will dismiss a man, and take away
The scanty bread from all his hungry babes,
Though he have plotted 'gainst my very life.
The favor of the King, who, as you say,
Now bids me act for you for a short while,
I take with more concern than gratitude.

Dus. There was before thy birth a man who wept
Because he thought a sovereignty about
To be inflicted on him, and his name
Was—*Fool*.

Mad. I own I am not wise enough.
I find no relish in the strife that men
Keep up for transient power, who, when they win,
Do find themselves their only subjects, grieve,
Like the famed Pándu Princes, when too late,
That their earth-hunger had been satisfied
To a degree that leaves them desolate.

Dus. How is it with thee, Master Sapience, now?

Mad. Forgive me, father, but I feel I'm made
Of softer stuff.

Dus. Of softer stuff? Well then,
I'll change the subject for the time, and talk
About a softer matter, softer far
Than unpressed cotton recently refined,
The body of an infant newly born,
The fragrant petals of a full-blown rose,
Or e'en the whisper of a gentle breeze
Which blows from Malay's fragrant sandal plains.

Mad. What may that be, my dearest father?

Dus. Son,
Thy happiness has ever been my care.

Mad. I daily feel your kindness, which I can't
Fully requite e'en though I consecrate
My life to serve on you.

Dus. Well-spoken, son!
But tell me this: Say, when Vasanta¹⁾ throws
His fresh-green mantle on the teeming Earth,
And bids fair Nature show, like a coy maid,
The wealth of roses on her blushing cheek,
Teaching bright-plumaged tenants of the air
To pour their songs voluptuously all round,
Like hired minstrels of the happy time,
Say, when the moon, so like a silver shield,
Has sent her glorious rays, to boldly peep
Through the open window of thy perfumed room,
What thoughts can possibly employ thy mind?

Mad. Why, at such times, the holiest thoughts are mine.
I learn to be as meek as any flower,
To be as useful as the night's great orb,
And join my voice, though scarce in unison,
With those of cheerful birds, in praise of Him
Whose grace enlivens Nature for our sakes.

Dus. And join thy throat too, from sheer sympathy,
With some thief's neck whose collar is a rope.
Are you a youth, a man, that pass for such?

¹⁾ The god of spring.

And know you not why half our land's young men
Omit to eat or drink, forget to sleep,
And learn to disobey their parents dear ?

Mad. I hope you do not bid me disobey
The best of fathers you have proved to be.

Dus. I'd rather have a son undutiful
Than one too good by half, and dull, like thee.
Oh, are you less impassioned than a horse
Which manifests soft impulses of love,
And which, with amour heated, bites the bit,
Throws down his lord, and gallops off to pay
His homage to a young coquettish mare ?

*This is so
becoming in the
mouth of a father
when talking with
his son on love
matters !*

Mad. Your teachings, father, made me spurn the sex.
The dreadful fate of valiant Kíchaka,¹⁾
Of Lanká's chief, ten-headed Rávana,²⁾
Of ugly-bodied Indra,³⁾ god of gods,

1) *Kíchaka* attempted the virtue of Draupadi, the wife of the Pándu Princes, and was killed by Bhíma, one of her husbands, by stratagem.

2) *Rávana* carried off Síta, the wife of Ráma. The famous war of the Rámáyana ensued, and ended in the annihilation of nearly the whole race of Rákshasas, including Rávana.

3) *Indra* deceived Ahalyá, the wife of Gautama, who thereupon pronounced a curse on him, in consequence of which his whole person has become disfigured.

And of the spotted Moon,¹⁾ bids me beware
Of love.

Dus. Shall man refuse his frugal fare,
Because some gluttons have o'erfed themselves
To death? And may one shun a healing drug
Of which an overdose has well-nigh killed
The luckless victim of a stupid quack?
Can you prefer an open, houseless plain,
And sky's high canopy, for residence,
Because some heaven-kissing edifice,
Whose top was out of centre, tumbled down?
The maddened Kichaka and all his kind
Paid dear for cursèd lust, and not for love.
Lust ever is made up of broken faith,
Of stolen marches, and of timid looks,
And has a course perturbed, a bitter end.
But love, true love, is Heaven's own precious gift.
It is a quiet harbour, safe enough
For this world's weary pilgrim, where he may
Take his sweet rest, in full forgetfulness
Of the great elemental wars, which rage
Outside the infolding arms which shelter him.

¹⁾ The *Moon* seduced Tárá, the wife of Brihaspati, and became the object of a curse which is the cause of the dark spots upon its surface.

Mad. And who is it, dear father, I should love ?

Dus. Hear then, but burst not with excessive joy.
What sayst thou to a matchless pair of eyes,
Whose single glance will set thy heart on fire ?
Or to those blue-black gently arching brows,
Which serve as bows for Cupid's flowery darts ?
A shell-like neck, a bust of glorious make,
A slender waist, straight leg and handsome foot ?
These may be thine, if thou but look with love.

Mad. I know my sister Vishayá doth own
These graces in an eminent degree.
To whom else this description may apply
In Kuntala, I cannot yet perceive.
But I care not. For, if it is your wish
That I shall wed, why, I am ready now,
Although the bride should be an ugly girl,
Sprung from the lowest rank.

Dus. Thinkst thou, I'll choose
For thee, my son, a thing that's plain or low ?
Give up suspense, and let thine ears delight
To hear at once that, with a little pluck,
And necessary courtship, thou canst win
To these thy blessed arms, fair Champaká,
Our Sovereign's daughter.

Mad. Champaká ?

Dus. The same.

Mad. Our Sovereign's daughter ?

Dus.

Yes. Why dost thou start

At the bare mention of her name ?

Mad.

And I

Must woo her ?

Dus.

Yes, as well befits thy youth.

Mad. Can you be earnest in this matter, father ?

Dus. As earnest, Madana, as when I took

To wife thy mother.

Mad.

Do you force me thus

To disobey you once in all my life ?

Dus. What ails thee, blockhead, that thou seem'st so dense ?

Mad. You may as well direct a fox to seek

The hand in marriage of a lioness ;

Or bid a tiny glow-worm wed a star

Whose shining orb the sable night is proud

To wear upon her forehead. Champaká

Is too angelic, too divine by far

To be aspired after by a man

So gross and earthly as I surely am.

I am her father's subject, will be hers.

That I should harbour such fond thoughts of her

Goes 'gainst my very nature. God forbid !

Dus. (*Aside.*) 'Tis hard to lead a man upon a path

When still 'tis meet to hide the goal from him ;

And 'tis not time I should enlighten him
As to my cherished aims.—

Well, Madana,
I'll leave thee to thy thoughts on this affair,
Wherein, as in thine office, I do wish
Success to thee beyond thy wildest hopes.

Mad. I'll try to do my duty.

Enter VISHAYÁ.

Dus. Vishayá,
My daughter, comes with such a glorious gait,
As would do credit to an elephant.¹⁾
She has just passed her sixteenth year, and I
Am much to blame for not procuring her
A proper consort. I must look to it.
(*To Vish.*) Come, darling! Wilt thou give me a short leave
That I may visit Chandanávatí?
What shall I send or bring thee from that town?
Why art thou silent? Speak. What are thy thoughts?
What are these blushes for? Are they thine answers?
Command me, I shall get a tigress' milk
Or any rarity that may be hid
In the dark bowels of the briny deep;
And if I fail to satisfy thy wish,
Call me no more thy father.

¹⁾ A simile favorite with Hindu poets.

Vish.

Gracious sire,

I'm not so sick in mind that I cannot
Be cured by aught Earth's surface can supply;
Nor yet so sick in body as to want
The means of healing from a beast so fierce
An enemy by nature to our kind.

Dus. Has Princess Champaká's own goldsmith taxed
His mercenary brain to forge a trinket
Of newest fashion, of more show than substance?
And dost thou, Vishayá, true to thy sex,
Seek to be furnished with the novelty?
If thou wilt have the like, why then, thou shalt.

Vish. Time was when every bracelet, necklace, ring,
Bodice or cloth of gold had charms for me.
I know not how, the attraction is now fled.
The jewels I wear already weigh too much.

Dus. Divert thyself with parrots, good my child.
Their prattling will beguile thy leaden hours.

Vish. My stupid maid has taught the little birds
Finely. They dote upon their feathered lovers,
Call them by tender names both night and day,
And, on the slightest provocation, broach
Upon the ear a fancied narrative
Of ogling eyes, pledged faith, imprinted kisses
And all the artillery of Cupid's fire.

Dus. We must get other birds, then.

Vish.

Father, no.

That won't mend matters. Doesn't the adage say
That, in the beasts, the ears got at their birth
Are better than the horns which later grow ?

Dus. What wouldst thou have me do, dear Vishayá ?

Vish. Say, must the cares of State so swallow up
Your time that private matters shall not claim
A corner there ?

Dus. (*Aside.*) I own that I deserve
Her mild rebuke. I more than guess the drift
Of these her gentle hints. She seems as warm
As is her brother frosty.

Daughter dear,

Wilt thou tell me what is the private duty
Of which my sad neglect thou seem'st to feel
So sorely ? If thou be explicit, child,
I will fulfil thy wishes in a trice.

Vish. (*Aside.*) Explicit ! That I cannot be. I'll speak
In parables, and he who rules a State
May be acute enough to understand
His daughter.—

(*Bashfully.*) In our fair orchard, four short winters since,
I planted, with an earnest heart, the stone
Of a delicious mango come from far.

I daily watered it with my own hands
Out of the contents of my golden urn,
And watched its infant growth. Right speedily,
It sprouted and became a lovely plant.
'Would you had marked how tenderly its head,
Helped by the wind, shook and made various shifts
To kiss the lip, the cheek and e'en the hand
Of her whom it did seem to thank for life ;
Or how it waved its tender fresh-green leaves,
Like a maid's fingers, as if beckoning
Her heart's great love, unseen by any eye.

Dus. What does this prodigy say I should do ?

Vish. It nothing says. But, father, do not think
That silence can imply a want of feeling.
|| They oft pine most who manifest the least.

Dus. The plant is lucky in that it has got
A kind and able advocate in thee.

Vish. In seriousness, dear father, I do hope
That in a twelve-month, it may glad my heart
With the long looked-for first-fruits of its growth..
'Tis time then that we should inaugurate
The customary rites to consummate
The honor of the future mother.

Dus.

Well.

Let the plant enter now the married state ;
And, Madana, get thou the ceremony
Performed without delay. But I have stayed

Here longer than I meant. Now must I start.

Adieu, my children. [Exit DUS. followed by MAD.]

Vish

Woe is me ! What now ?

What have I said ? Why did I speak at all ?

As if in the behalf of this dull tree,

I've used my tongue so freely that I can't

Recall my words to mind without a shock

To my own virgin-feelings. After all,

To no good purpose; for, I fear that he

Has not perceived my real meaning yet.

Was he a fool ?

But how could he ? His mind is always full

Of some engrossing scheme; and I could speak

In riddles only. How long, oh, how long

Am I to pine in secret ? Oh my Fate !

Enter KAMALÁ.

Kam. Thy mother, Vishayá, is calling thee.

What art thou brooding on ? Why seekest thou

To be thus all alone ? Why this dejection ?

Oh, thou shalt cast aside that heaviness,

For it does not become thy lusty youth.

Those eyes that burn far brighter than twin stars,

That graceful bust which tempts the anchorite,

Those curling tresses, that moist scarlet lip

So like a ripe and dewy *Bimba* fruit,

And that rich natural hue which puts to shame

The *Ketaki*,¹⁾ demand a sprightliness

¹⁾ A strong-scented yellow flower. (*Pandanus odoratissimus*.)

From their possessor. But, dear Vishayá,
Dost thou so take to heart thy father's trip
To Prince Kulinda's land ? He'll soon return,
Having despatched the grave affairs of State.

Vish. Thou has not guessed aright the real cause
Of my anxiety. My thoughts are full
Of the young mango tree which I have reared
With all the fondness of a loving parent.
It grieves my soul that my good father has
So long delayed the customary rite
Its age demands. This is what makes me sad.

Kam. I understand thy words and something more.
The care which is bestowed upon that tree
Is but a counterfeit of that strong passion,
Which holds sway in the breast of thee, its mother,
And may be well excused in such as thou.
Cupid has flung at thee his flowery darts.
But thy good father doth not lack regard
As thou believest. Who knows but this trip
May tend to bless thee with a husband ?

Vish.

Fie !

Thou sure dost guess and hope too much. But come.
My mother must be waiting. Let us start. [Exeunt.]



ACT III.

Scene I. *Chandanāvati.*—A public street.

Enter a COOLIE with two cocoanuts, followed by a PEON.

Peon. Stop, stop, you scoundrel, where are you going?

Coolie. I must be off. Don't suspect me. [*Running.*]

P. Suspect you! What do you mean? Stand there, you wretch!

C. These cocoanuts are not stolen. Ask that shopman. I gave him three seers of paddy for them.

P. Who wants to know that? You rascal, if you move a step, you are a dead man.

C. Take one of these cocoanuts, and let me go.

P. I don't want your cocoanuts. Put them both down and stop.

C. Take them both for yourself. Only let me go.

[*Throwing away the cocoanuts, and trying to skulk away.*]

P. (*Seizing him by the hand.*) You shan't move. What are you shaking for? I only want you for some Government work.

C. Let me off this time. My wife is possessed with a devil. If I am away from home for half an hour, her neck swells as big as an elephant's leg, or she jumps into the well.

P. Don't excite yourself about that. Somebody at home will knock the devil out of her with a broom.

C. But I must run home with these cocoanuts for a cow which has just had a calf in my house.

P. You are mistaken. It was a bullock that had the calf, and all the town will go and see it, and do all that is necessary.

C. Alas, alas, I'm dying. [Sinks down.]

P. What is the matter? He seems to be sinking fast. I'll pour a pail of cold water over his head, and see if that won't bring him round.

C. Don't trouble yourself, sir. I'm better now.

P. Cold water is a powerful remedy for your sickness.

C. I really have got a pain in my stomach, sir.

P. I won't contradict you, because yours is an illness which cannot be disproved. You must take the proper remedy, and I will give it to you. Hold your back up.

C. Thank you, sir. I am so much better that I don't want your help. What do you wish me to do?

P. Take this money.

C. I can't, sir. I know you officers' ways.

P. What do you mean, you ass?

C. It was only last year that a policeman, with a half-friendly, half-ominous look on his face, came up and spoke to my neighbour's sister-in-law's half-brother, and told him that the reputation of his department was in danger, because he had not detected a highway robbery; then he took out

a Rupee from his own pocket, and gave it to him, and assuring him of perfect protection, and by dint of giving him a little bodily exercise, made him produce the Rupee as part of the stolen property, and "confess" that the ornaments had been melted or sold to somebody he didn't know. Of course, the offence was easily detected, the poor devil got five years' protection in jail, and the policeman got a present of 50 Rupees from Government, "as a token of their high sense of the transcendental abilities of this worthy servant."

P. Don't be afraid, my good man. I am going to pay you first for the work you've got to do.

C. You are really too kind. The wind is more still than usual, and beasts of prey are more quiet than usual, only when there is some mischief brewing.

P. I mean what I say, idiot.

C. You always do. You did last year too, when you got my old uncle to catch twenty hanapers of fish for Prince Kulinda's hounds, and made him all sorts of promises in the meanwhile, and then got him to pay two annas to a petition-writer for a receipt for his wages, and when he gave it to you, and asked for his money, your dignity was insulted, and you left him with a bloody nose, after tearing his nets into pieces.

P. But you see times have changed since then. Since Prince Chandrahása came into power, we are the slaves of the people, and not the people of us, and if they work for the State, we've got to pay them and to thank them too.

C. This looks as if Government meant to be honest, almost as honest as we fishermen. Not a single one of us has ever been sent to jail.

P. Except for his own crimes, you mean.

C. Well, if any one was sent, it was all through drink. For, all of us, who are "the sons of the sea," can't resist the arrack-shop.

P. But you don't look like a drunkard.

C. Do you say that, because of my silver-girdle and my double-handkerchief? I suppose you do. Not every coolie has such things. Well, you know, since Chandrahása became our Ruler, he has made the liquor-sellers raise up their prices so high, that we poor men are compelled, when we have enough money, to choose between getting drunk and looking respectable. I choose to look respectable, and, as you see, I can hold up my head with my betters at car-feasts and so on.

P. I will put you in the way of buying another new cloth. You have only got to dig holes on both sides of the street, to set up bamboos for making festoons.

C. Digging on this hard ground is very difficult work. If I only had to plough the waters or dig in the sands, I shouldn't much care. I am a duffer at this hard earth. It was only two months ago that I heard Prince Chandrahása talking about the cruelty of killing any living thing, and I

at once made up my mind to leave my boat and nets and go in for the plough and the scythe.

P. How do you like the change ?

C. Why, my wife does not expect to become a widow twice a day now, when there is a bit of a gale ; and I have no reason now to curse great men for getting fatter every day just to spite us that have to shoulder them from stage to stage. All this is the result of Chandrahása's teaching. May he live long enough to see his great-grandson's great-grandson.

P. You wish him descendants before he has got a wife.

C. Well then, let him marry a girl as good as my wife, who makes mistakes indeed like all women, but takes her punishment like an ass. By the bye, are not these preparations for the marriage of Chandrahása ?

P. No, my good man, they are in honor of Dushtabuddhi, the Prime Minister of our Lord Paramount, who has sent a courier to say that he is going to pay us a visit.

C. If so, I shall be very sorry to have any hand in these things.

P. Why so ?

C. I don't like his name.

P. He was not named to please you.

C. Just after the last time he came here, there was an

awful famine in the land, and we couldn't get food either in the sea or out of it. He wears comets in his turban.¹⁾

P. Well, let us talk of his comets and your wife, after he has come and gone. To work now. I must go and look after other preparations. Work, and don't pretend. [*Exit.*

C. No, no ; I will be as industrious as a drone.

[*Works singing.*

These times seem happy, since the poor

May well be gay and witty;

Our work is light, our pay is sure,

And still we call it bitti.²⁾

When sovereigns or their ministers

Do visit us from far lands,

Their deputies here make these stirs,

Festoons, and flags, and garlands.

Who is to blame when Show thus rules?

Those that permit or do it?

These may be knaves, but those are fools

That cannot well see thro' it.

What do I care? Our Prince is good,

The coins I'll get are better.

I'll work or play, and, in sour mood,

Cry, "Bitti doth me feller."

[*Exit.*

1) The allusion is to the Minister's head-dress decorated with gold and jewels, which the labourer speaks of as comets, often deemed to be forerunners of disasters.

2) A vernacular term signifying *gratuitous labour* enforced by former Governments.

Scene II. *Chandanāvati.—Kulinda's Palace.*

Enter KULINDA, SUSHENA and other officers.

Kulinda. How did the King of Kuntala receive
The tribute which you took for his acceptance ?

Sushena. He did receive it with as much good grace
As is within the power of any one
Whose heart's best part appeared to be in Heaven.
He has arrived at just that state of mind
When neither gain nor loss of temporal things
Is any matter of concern. My Lord,
He seems as willing to give up the sway
To Dushtabuddhi, as the latter is
To take it up.

Kul. What said the Minister
In reference to our land ?

Su. Most kindly words.
He did commend the wisdom of your rule.
Of Chandrahās he had not heard before ;
So when I told him how we all felt proud
Of our young Prince, he seemed to manifest
So great an interest that he made me say
How, where, and when the child was found by you,
And wound up his remarks with the best wishes
For Chandrahāsa's welfare and success.

Kul. My heart now glows with gratitude, and leaps
With joy that it so soon may hope to greet
Him in this city. But does no one here
Know where my Chandrahás is at this hour
Of noon? He told me he would soon return,
Having given orders for the fitting up
Of this our ancient city, to receive
Our most illustrious guest.

Off. He seems concerned
We had no longer notice of the visit,
And therefore toils he all the harder now.
Now rides he here cheering the workmen on,
Who deck each house and street with evergreens;
And now moves yonder that he may prepare
A cavalcade in holiday attire,
Led on by music that enchants the mind,
And elephants with howdas decked with gold,
And prancing steeds, and glittering palanquins.
The Minister whom thus he means to honor
May well feel puzzled whether most to praise
His taste or his true loyalty in this.

Kul. Unlike the mass of the adopted sons,
Who please their foster-fathers' doting eyes
Only till they attain their teens, and who,
Soon as they feel the glow of youth themselves,

Begin to pray that fever, carbuncle,
Or gout may carry off their aged sires,
That they may squander all their hoarded wealth,
Unshackled with the caution which belongs
To earners only, my good Chandrahás
Is, though I say it, a glory to my house ;
And naught but love of us and of the State
Directs his footsteps now, as formerly.

Enter a SERVANT.

Serv. May it please Your Highness, the Minister of Kuntala is arrived at the outskirts of the city, and Prince Chandrahása wishes you all to join the procession that is going to meet him.

Kul. He comes in sooner than was expected ; let us then go at once. [*Exeunt.*

Scene III. *Chandanávati.—Kulinda's Palace.*

Enter KULINDA and DUSHTABUDDHI and Train.

Kul.: I am, my Lord, no stranger to your kindness
Which, like the light of Heaven, enables all
The tributaries of dread Kuntala
To rule their lands in peace and happiness.

Dus. Your worth, good Prince, cannot be praised too much.

The weary traveller thanks you for your roads,
Where, overhead, the trees on either side
Support so thick a row of arches green,
As makes him feel, e'en at the noontide hour,
The cool refreshment of a moonlit night ;
And where the highwayman, with sling and darts,
Is mortified to see his trade is gone ;
And you are daily blessed by passengers,
Whose eyes delight to find, at every stage,
The crystal water of some spacious tank,
Close by a splendid house whose open gate
Invites them to a rich and free repast,
With shelter 'neath its hospitable roof .
Where once the wolves and tigers ranged at large
Amid the dark impenetrable woods,
We now behold wide seas of smiling fields,
Studded with pleasant homesteads. All these things
Avouch the wisdom of your Government ;
And peers and peasants seem alike content
And proud of you, their Ruler.

Kul.

What am I

That this success should be considered mine ?
'Tis, I repeat, the fruit of your good guidance ;
And next to that, I deem it the result
Of the good fortune of an orphan boy
That Heaven has blessed this country with.

Enter CHANDRAHÁSA, making obeisance to
DUSHTABUDDHI.

My Lord,

This is the child, the centre of my hopes ;
I earnestly commend him to your care.
When I at last am summoned from the world
And leave him fatherless a second time,
I shall feel death more easy, confident
That, under your protection, he will thrive.

Dus. (Taking the hands of CHANDRAHÁSA in his hands.)

Glad am I to be charged thus with the care
Of one in praise of whom no tongue is silent.
You shall not be worse treated than my son,
The heir of all my hopes.

Chand.

My future life

Shall shadow forth my lasting gratitude.
Yet who could hope, when I was still a child,
That I would be in person here today,
To greet my benefactor's Majesty ?
I faintly can recall the words of one
Whose spirit went to Heaven ere I could
Appreciate all her goodness to the full.
She oft would mourn my birth, which she declared
Was Royal. An evil star, pernicious Múla,
Had ushered me into the world. My sire,

SHRIGADGURU VISHWANATH
SINHASAN JANANAMANDIR

Who was the King of palmy Kérala,
Fell in a battle, and his widowed queen
Performed the duty of a true *Sutee*.
Then that good soul, that was my nurse before,
Took charge of me and fed me long by alms.
When many a time, the midday sun had climbed
The burning firmament, and there stood still
To spit down fire upon the basking world,
Her patient soul would lay me down outside
The mighty walls of some great man's abode,
Where stretching eaves afforded scanty shade ;
And she would weep her fill, would cry in pain
That six full hours of wandering far and wide
Had but fatigued her limbs and had not earned
Enough to satiate my hunger's pangs.
My childish pranks and thoughtless lispings would
Fill her with pleasure once. But when it struck her
Our living was precarious, many a tear
Would trickle down her cheeks. Oft would she stroke
My forehead, arms and legs, and heave a sigh
That they were not bedecked with ornaments
Which children, baser-born, could often boast.
She soon passed to the rest she needed sore,
And I was left a charge upon some town.
Blest be its unknown dames, who'd lead me home,

And there provide me with a bath, a meal,
And shelter for the night. There too I learned
To lisp the glorious name of One who is
The Orphan's Father and the Widow's Friend.
Soon did their kindly teaching save my life
At a dire moment which I even now
Recall with many a shudder. For, in short,
I stood before a ruffian in a wood
Inspiring horror, his uplifted sword
Aimed at my throat. What my offence had been,
And who it was that would so spill my blood,
I never yet did know. I sent up cries,
Which are the children's forte, and called upon
The magic name of the Purāṇic God
Who at the earnest call of Draupadi ¹⁾,
Of little Dhruva, ²⁾ and oppressed Prahlád, ³⁾
Had done more wondrous things than the rescue

1) Duhshāsana, a Kaurava Prince, attempted to outrage the modesty of Draupadi, the wife of the Pāṇdavas. She was saved from dishonor by Krishna in a miraculous way.

2) Dhruva, a King's son by his first wife, was ill-treated by his step-mother. He had to leave his father's palace for the wilderness at the early age of five. There his piety led to his being transformed into a star.

3) Prahláda's faith in Vishnu subjected him to the tyranny of his father, who one day challenged the son to prove his God's presence in a certain pillar. Prahláda prayed, out came Vishnu (incarnate as the Man-lion) from the pillar and slew the father.

Of harmless victims like myself. And mark
The potent spell of the expedient
So half-unconsciously employed. His heart
Of flint was softened, and he railed at him
Whose gold had brought him thither. Thus, my Lord,
Changing his purpose, did he maim my foot,
And leave me there, to hear the chorus loud
Of insects numberless, and to be watched
By eagles, snakes, hyenas, lions and wolves,
Till this my father chanced to hear my moans,
And took me up, and gave me here a home.
My further course has been most smooth. I've found
That Truth and Honor win where knavery fails,
And Faith supplies the balm when Fortune's cross.

Dus. Your tale, young Prince, is such as to enlist
The sympathies of even wicked men
In your behalf. Doubt not that you shall be
The enjoyer of my tenderest concern.
Your happiness shall be my chief desire.
Your principles of conduct please me well,
And could your time allow it, I would fain
Employ you in a great affair of State.

Chand. Name it, my Lord; and had I angels' wings,
And all their virtue, you could not expect
Obedience more implicit or more prompt.

Dus. Good Prince, accept my thanks. At break of day
Tomorrow will I hand to you a note
Of greatest import, to my son addressed.
To ensure despatch, you may as well dispense
With the retarding luxury of a train.
In Kuntala, when you have seen my son,
And done his bidding, you can, at your ease,
Return unto the bosom of the Prince,
Your loving father.

Chand. 'Tis as good as done,
Unto the very syllable.

Exeunt.

Scene IV. A grove near Kuntala.

Enter CHAMPAKAMĀLINI, VISHAYĀ and KAMALĀ.

Vish. How is it, Champakamālini, that though we have
had two hours' play in the water, I don't feel any more
cheerful than I did before?

Champ. It seems to me, Vishayā, that you entered into
the amusement with only half a heart, and therefore could
not enjoy it fully.

Kam. I think so too. It is easily explained. The greater
part of your attention was apparently directed to something
more interesting. You have been making a diagnosis of
the affections of your pet mango-tree which, through your
grace, has entered the marital life.

Vish. You have teased me enough about that matter already ; so I will thank you to spare me any further remarks and change the subject. Can't you sing ?

Kam Although I pride myself upon belonging to a family which can boast of a great skill in singing, my own qualifications in that direction are but small. I will, however, oblige you. [Sings.]

*The lovely Spring hath painted o'er
The meadow with sweet flowers ;
The woods now yield their honeyed store,
And shade in balmy bowers.*

*The cuckoo on her mango lost
Is seated with her mate ;
And in full-throated ease, she oft
Chides thus thy single state :—*

*"This season is the time for love.
Fond Maid ! why dost thou sleep ?
Bright Nature now, below, above,
Her jubilee doth keep.*

*What boots the lusture of that eye ?
The nectar on that lip ?
If that kill those who, doting, spy,
And this, if none can sip ?*

*Then heave a sigh, and bless the heart
That heaves a sigh for thee ;
Or if unknown, then use thine art, .
That man thy charms may see."*

Vish. You are harping on the same strain still. I am getting tired of your company. So I will leave you for a time and give vent to my inexplicable dulness in some lonely place. Have I leave, Champakamālini?

Champ. With all my heart. Be careful how you follow the advice of the cuckoo.

Vish. Enough. I won't deserve your strictures next time.

[*Exit VISHAYĀ one way and the others another.*]

Scene V.—*Another part of the grove.*

*Enter VISHAYĀ, observing CHANDRAHĀSA sleeping,
and a horse tied to a tree.*

Vish. What do I see beneath yon Peepul¹⁾ tree?
Am I awake? or do I sleep and dream?
Eyes! do you serve me right? or do you mock?
This can be no illusion. But why not?
The burden of the song, so lately heard,
Still rings in these my ears; and fancy still
Draws glowing pictures for my mental eye.
Let me approach and get a nearer view.
O heart! burst not. Contain thyself awhile,
And joy may still be thine. If these my senses
Are not deranged through fever of the brain,

1) The holy fig-tree.

I here behold a youth, who, riding hard,
Has sought repose beneath this leafy tree.
A youth, said I ? He more than mortal seems.
One of the demi-gods, perhaps, who still,
Discarding heavenly bliss, are often said
To alight on earth, and by some shady grove,
Beside the waters of a glassy lake,
To steep their senses in oblivion.
Can man be owner of such beauteous form,
Too rich for use on this degraded earth ?
Blest art thou, fragrant Breeze, that thus mayst fan
The weariness from out his aching limbs.
And blest thou, Sleep, that with thy mantle dost
So wrap him, seal his eyes with thy cool fingers,
And, in one soft embrace, make him forget
The earth's hard facts, misfortunes, cruelties.
Why shall not I, with equal ardour, woo
This handsome youth this instant ? O stern Fate !
O Rules absurd ! Parents' authority !
How hard it is that their old eyes must fix
What the young heart should love ! What means this sweat ?
And what the cause of this unusual thrill
That courses through my quivering frame ? Alas !
Can Cupid be both hot and cold at once,
That me o'erpowers in ways so opposite ?

Shall I retrace my steps ? My will forbids.
 Shall I remain ? My fears advise me, no.
 My comrades might suspect me and betray.
 How happy would I be, if I could learn
 Where I can see him once again. But soft !
 From out his pocket hangs a letter which,
 Perchance, might yield the clue to his abode.
 Love knows no rules of nicety. Let me see.
 Be steady, feet, and make no creaking noise ;
 And fingers, help me once. [Takes up the letter.

My father's seal !

His autograph ! My mind presages now
 Some joyful news at hand. Yes, Kamalá
 Rightly predicted that my father's trip
 Would make me happy. Thank you, father dear,
 For your most tender care. I find this note
 Intended for my brother. Let me read.

*Ayam mahāhitosmākam*¹⁾

Bhavitā Kuntalādhipah :

Shiṅghram pradiyatām asmai

*Vishamāmodanāya nah.*²⁾

1) *Mahāhita*, if considered as made up of *mahā*+*hita*, means *great friend*; if it be taken as made up of *mahā*+*ahita*, means *great enemy*.
 Dushtabuddhi wrote it in the latter sense.

2) This stanza has been adopted as answering the purpose of
Vishayā better than the passage in the Sanskrit Jaimini Bhārata,
 which includes the following clause : "*Vishamasmai pradātavyam.*"

What does my father say ?

*The bearer is our dearest friend,
He'll be the King of Kuntalá;
That joy may ours be in the end,
Give him at once good poison, son."*

This is neither rhyme, nor reason. Let me consider it sentence by sentence.

"The bearer is our dearest friend."

This is as it should be. Who would be an enemy of this angel ?

"He'll be the King of Kuntalá."

This too is very apt. He is quite nice-looking enough, if he is as clever as he looks, to be able to rule even a greater country than Kuntala. The rest of the letter is misleading. What fool would wish that his best friend and a future king should be murdered in cold blood ? My father evidently intended to write :—

"Vishayámodanáya nah."

If this reading be adopted, the meaning will beautifully run thus :—

*"That joy may ours be in the end,
Give him at once good Vishayá."*

It is most providential that this letter was seen by me before it could do any mischief. And yet, what will be the use of my having seen it, if I leave it as it is ? I must correct the misplaced letter "*má*" into "*yá*." ¹⁾ It was lucky

¹⁾ This can be easily done in the Devanágari character, thus म into य.

that after my bath this afternoon, I did not omit to make the usual application of lamp-black to my eyes, and that the nail of the little finger of my left hand has been allowed to grow. Well, I will do what I can with these materials to make the necessary alteration.

[*Corrects the letter.*]

I'm glad the thing is done, and well done too.

I care not Cupid. I've a lover true.

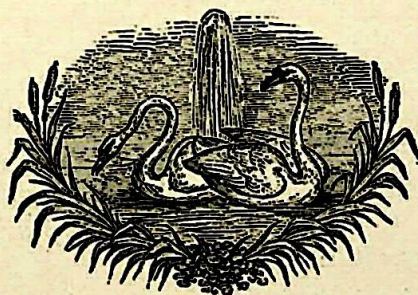
I will replace the letter quietly, [Places it.]

And steal away, and, from my balcony,

Watch his arrival at my father's home.

Adieu, my charmer, till thou wake and come.

[*Exit.*]



ACT IV.

Scene I. *Kuntala.—A Marriage-Pandal
in front of Dushtabuddhi's house.*

Enter MADANA, GÁLAVA and others.

Mad. I wish that I had had more time for preparations. But my dear father expects promptitude; and you believe that this is the most auspicious time for the nuptials directed by him. We will therefore begin the ceremony at once.

Gál. We can hardly have a more august assembly of spectators than is seated before us here. The magnates of the city are all represented. Let the bride and bridegroom be brought in.

*Enter CHANDRAHÁSA and VISHAYÁ led by KAMALÁ,
decorated with crests etc.*

Mad. With the kind permission of you all who have responded to my invitation, I, on behalf of my honoured father Dushtabuddhi, give away my beloved sister Vishayá to my virtuous friend Chandrahása to be his lawful wife. May Heaven rain happiness on their heads. [*Joining the hands of Chand. and Vish., and pouring water.*]

Gál. So may it be.

*The pair shall seven times walk around
The fire in nice accord,
And windings of the thread redound
To bond of bed and board.*

[*The ceremonies gone through.*]

Kam. Thou, Bride, shalt bear five daughters fair,
And eight sons, wise and gay;
And mayst thou on thy forehead wear
The crimson mark for aye. [Waving the lamps.]

Gál. The ceremony is now over. It only remains to distribute flowers to the assembly, and give presents to the Bráhmans who are declared the gods of the earth.

Mad. Certainly. Some one give away these flowers. Whatever wealth is in my father's treasury shall go to enrich Bráhmans, so that they may bless the wedding of my dearest and only sister. [*Flowers are distributed and Gálava sprinkles coloured rice on the heads of the pair.*]

Scene II. A Street near Kuntala.

Enter DÚSHATABUDDHI.

Dus. I see the spires of Kuntala at hand.
How quick has been my journey back! 'Tis but
A week since I did leave the capital;
And ay, meanwhile, much business has been done.
Young Chandrahás has, I believe, been stowed
Away in mother-earth. Kulinda too
Is lodged in prison for supposed misdeeds,
And, in my view, he has been rightly served.
For, in the name of God, what need had he
To nurse my bitter foe within his land?

I now can live with cheerful heart, and count
Upon assuming kingly titles soon. [Discovers a snake.]
What's this? My old acquaintance? 'Tis the snake
That kept the guard upon my treasury,
What can he mean by thus deserting us?
Has anything amiss occurred at home?

[Sees Festoons and hears Music.]

What signify these green festoons? And what
Is the occasion for this music gay?
And in my palace too? Has Madana
Forgotten me, and deemed me grown too old
To be apprised of these festivities?
He never my forgiveness shall obtain.

Enter MADANA, making obeisance.

Oh here he comes. A veriest fool indeed?
O blockhead, but with asses fit to mate?
Wilt thou explain what means this merriment?
And why thou hast so squandered all my hoard?

Mad. Excuse me, dearest father, I've done naught
But what you did command me I should do.

Dus. I never bid thee do this, stupid fool!

Mad. Is't possible? Did you not send a note
By Chandrahása and direct therein
The giving of my sister's hand to him
In holy marriage?

Dus. O thou worse than fool!
What? Hast thou joinèd them in wedlock? Ass!

Mad. Three days ago, dear father, it was done.
I never thought to disobey in this.

Dus. You think! Can asses think? Now then, depart
To any far-off wilderness, and stay
Until Death's hand shall carry thee away.

Mad. I will not grumble, father. 'Tis the fate
Of duteous sons sometimes. Did Râma once
Not go and live amidst a jungle wild,
Because his father ordered him? Alas!
Is exile my reward?

Dus. How couldst thou think
I wished my greatest enemy to be
My daughter's husband?

Mad. What? The letter said
He was our greatest friend.

Dus. Alas! I find
The damned rules of euphony have done
Some mischief in this case. But didn't you mark
I therein ordered you to murder him
By some strong poison? By this you might see
The meaning of the earlier passage.

Mad. Sire,
You there wrote nothing of the kind. In truth,

The note directed me to give to him
Our Vishayá. It spoke of nothing else.

Dus. Go, bring it me.

Mad. See, father, here it is. [*Hands the letter.*]

Dus. [*Reading it.*] 'Tis as you say; but I am quite content.

A sage, versed in the starry lore, advised
The sending of this most ambiguous note.
He told me that if marriage should result,
Then Chandrahás would be most prosperous.
But this affair must ever secret be.
I'm glad I've got a worthy son-in-law.
In our attentions will we be most kind
To him. So go and keep him company,
While I will go and overlook the work
That must have gathered since I went away. [*Exit MADANA.*]

Dus. [*Enters his house and remains alone.*]

And so my schemes have lost their destined prey
A second time. I wonder what great power
Did guide my hand in penning this same note,
That it did bring him happiness, not death.
I will not yet despair. Twice have I tried.
But there's a charm about the figure "3".
He yet shall die. And let my Vishayá be
A widow. For I can't help that result.
At dusk of eve today, two murderers

Shall hide themselves beneath the gloomy roof
Of Chandi's sacred edifice, that stands
Upon the outskirts of this spacious town.
They shall be charged to shut out for this time
That "milk of human kindness" which, they said,
Deprived them of the sinews of their heart
When they went forth to kill this very boy
Some years ago. Now will I call and see
This most unwelcome Chandrahása here.
Who waits ?

Enter a SERVANT.

Serv. What is your pleasure, mighty Lord ?

Dus. Go, ask my son-in-law to come to me. [*Exit SERV.*]
I'll look as gentle as my thoughts allow.

Enter CHANDRAHÁSA.

Chand. I humbly crave your blessing, honored sire.

Dus. And I do give it, son, with all my heart.
Thy merit did produce such an effect
Upon my mind, that I have lost no time
In drawing closer our connections old
By giving thee my only daughter.

Chand. Sire,
I cannot be too thankful for the gift.

Dus. I'm glad, my son, thou hast already passed.
The great part of the customary rites

Of this auspicious marriage. What remains
Can be performed this evening. When the Sun
Doth take his plunge into the western sea,
Be thou provided with the needful things
For worshipping great Chandi, and as is
The custom of our household, go alone,
And, with a heart of true devotion, there
Perform the service.

Chand.

Sire, it shall be done.

[*Exeunt.*]

Scene III. *Kuntala.—An apartment in the King's Palace.*

Enter KING.

King. The Sun begins to gild the western sky ;
The tuneful birds retire to take their rest.
Now is it meet to cease the toils of day,
And secretly to commune with my God.
The holy marks shall grace my forehead now,
And help, by their known virtue, to abstract
The feeble mind from every wordly thought.
Now where's the glass ? [*Taking up a looking-glass with one
hand, and ashes with the other.*] Ah ! what a sight is this !
Oh 'tis the fault of having many servants.
The glass has not been cleaned by any one. [*Cleans the glass.*]
Oh no ! it won't do yet. It fails to show
The head, the eyes, the ears, the mouth and chin,

The whiskers which my face seemed proud to wear,
And somewhat hid the wrinkles made by time.
Does not my trunk support my head as once ?
It does, and no mistake. Else how could I
See this my trunk reflected perfectly ?
O Glass ! canst thou misrepresent and hide,
Like wicked men who, for some private ends,
Conceal the truth from friends they seem to love ?
This is a novel sight, whose meaning may
Lie deeper than the grasp of shallow minds.

Enter GÁLAVA.

Here comes my family-priest in proper time.
Worthy Preceptor, versed in all the lore
That doth concern the unknown future time,
I beg your Holiness to enlighten me
On what at present seems to me most strange.
This most deceitful mirror fails to show
The image of my face to-day.

Gál.

Good King,

Rail not at that true glass, that served you right
Upwards of twoscore years. If now it fails,
'Tis to advise you of a great event.
If I was not aware how light you deem
The fleeting good that mocks us on the earth,
I would not now explain the effect hereof.

King. Great sage, I am prepared to hear the worst.
Under your guidance, will I nothing dread.

Gál. I knew your heart. Great King! Be of good cheer.
Your end is now approaching. You shall quit
This mortal body and without delay.

King. Death has no terrors for me. Yet the realm
Will want a ruler when I shall be gone;
And my dear daughter Champaká has not
As yet been married. This perplexes me.

Gál. These cares are proper. Yet embrace such means
As will be in your reach within an hour.
That space of time concluded, you shall hence
Unto the forest, and there, with your Queen,
Await the summons of the Lord to Heaven.

King. Oh well-advised! Suggest the means to me.

Gál. There's now, in Dushtabuddhi's house, a youth
Named Chandrahús, a good and worthy prince.
Bestow fair Champaká at once on him
By the Gandharva-rite,¹⁾ and make him King
In your own place.

King. I thank thee, Holy Priest.
Who waits?

Enter a SERVANT.

Call Madana.

[Exit SERVANT.]

¹⁾ A very summary form of marriage.

Enter MADANA.

Ah, here he comes.

Dear Madana, go home without delay,
And send young Chandrahása here with speed.

[Exit MADANA.]

Oh let me now be severed from the world,
E'en as the snake is from the slough it quits.
Do you confirm me in the views I hold
Touching the nothingness of worldly things.

Gál. Hear then, O King, what lessons Ráma taught
His most devoted brother Lakshmana,
Ere they departed to the wilderness.
What we enjoy upon this earth is fleeting
As is the flash of lightning in the clouds.
And life, it dries up like the water-drop
Resting upon a heated iron-pan.
E'en as a frog, caught in a serpent's throat,
Still aims at seizing flies that hover near,
So do mankind, though in the gripe of death,
Pursue the transient pleasures of this world.
For father, mother, brother, kindred, all,
Meet like the sticks upon the river's breast,
Or like the beasts that come together near
The water-cisterns, quench their thirst, and part.
Wealth is, like shadows, steady at no place.

All that we see is but a juggle or dream,
Which soon must vanish with excessive pain.
True Knowledge, then, alone can chase away
Dull ignorance that binds us to this life ;
And contemplation, free from mundane strife,
Confers beatitude you'll vainly look
For in the dirty world's misleading book.¹⁾

King. I will not fail to profit by your words.

Enter CHANDRAHÁSA.

Gál Ah ! Here comes Chandrahás.

King.

My dearest son,

For son you soon shall be, I am most glad,
By my preceptor's orders, to appoint
You to succeed me in this mighty realm.
This great charge will be coupled with a boon,
The hand of my fair daughter. Come, make haste.
The coronation and the nuptials must
Take place at once.

[*Exeunt.*

Scene IV. *Kuntala.—The King's Palace.*

Enter CHANDRAHÁSA, CHAMPAKAMÁLINI and GÁLAVA.

Chand. All these events have come so thick on me,
That I have not had breathing time. Good Priest,
I know not whether most to grieve or most

¹⁾ The greater part of this speech is a free translation of a passage in the Sanskrit *Adhyátma Rámáyana*.

Rejoice, for his sake, at the setting forth
Of my good father. For, my heart is apt
To break when I reflect what hunger, thirst,
Sun's heat, night's cold, will have to be endured
Both by the King and by his consort, ere
They can attain those blissful scenes in Heaven,
For which they now prepare themselves. But then,
It is not giv'n to all to be foretold,
By glass or other thing inanimate,
When to expect the icy hand of Death.
And, I believe, it is their merit pure
And your good guidance, have enabled them
To know the time, together with the mode,
That is to lead them to beatitude.

Gál. When I recall to mind the qualities
Which did adorn the head and heart of him
Whom I must call late King, my aged eyes
Are so provoked to shed a stream of tears,
That all the world's philosophy cannot
Restrain the torrent. Good my liege, his life
Affords material for the deepest thought ;
For he attained the object of his life
By doing honestly the duties of it.

Chand. My aim shall be to tread the very path
Which he did follow through your good advice.

But Champaká, how painful must it be
To thee to think that, at the very time
Thou didst obtain a husband, thou hast lost
Thy parents from the world at least.

Champ. My Lord,
When Reverend Priests can find it in their hearts
To grieve for their departed friends, a girl,
Unlearned in the mysteries of life,
May be excused if she should drop a tear
For those to whom she owes her birth and all.
But I am grateful to wise Providence
That I have, for my lord, a noble prince
Whose childhood has been such a strange romance,
And who, in early youth, has been exposed
To fame undying.

Chand. Through the kind commands
Of Dushtabuddhi, I was introduced
Into this city and the precious love
Of Vishayá. And by thy father's grace,
I have thy hand, which I so highly prize,
And a great kingdom.

Champ. Vishayá has been
My chief companion for a length of time.
So well do I esteem her that I feel
Most proud in being thus allowed to share
With her thy warm affections.

Gál. Gracious Queen,
I do commend those generous thoughts, and wish
That Heaven may always keep you in this mind.
Now Chandrahása, your accession must
Be properly proclaimed throughout the realm.
At night, you, with Queen Champaká, shall ride
The royal elephants and take a round,
And that occasion use to pay respects
To Dushtabuddhi.

Chand. You shall be obeyed.

[*Exeunt.*]



ACT V.

Scene I. *Kuntala.*—*An apartment in Dushtabuddhi's House.*

Enter DUSHTABUDDHI.

Dus. I almost feel the thing already done.
My foe is gone, I care not whither bound.
So Wiles! I am beholden much to you.
You've placed my progeny upon the throne.
What lack I then on this side of the grave?
Henceforth my lot will be bliss unalloyed.

(Noise of a procession.)

What means this gathering in the street?

Enter KHARAKA.

Kh. My Lord, the bridegroom is coming to greet you.

Dus. Which bridegroom, man?

Kh. I cannot say which. For he is doubly so.

Dus. Whose son-in-law?

Kh. His father-in-law's.

Dus. A pox on your throat. Who is his father-in-law?

Kh. He has two.

Dus. Who are they?

Kh. Shall I name them in the order of the marriages or according to their rank?

Dus. Any way, you fool.

Kh. I think then that I should mention them in the order of their wealth. Here again, it is a difficult matter. The one has given up riches, and the other's riches have been given away for him.

Dus. One more circumlocution, and you die.

Kh. Pardon me. But it is my grandmother's habit which, with her dying breath, she bequeathed to me. She once had the good fortune to see a snake creep away after biting a neighbour's child. The physician, in order to ascertain whether it was a poisonous snake, interrogated her. She entered into a long dissertation on the beauty of her own child that had been drowned twenty years previously, and on her wedding with that child's father, so that by the time the story was concluded, the bitten child had died.

Dus. My method is more summary with you, you rogue! It is this (*striking*). Now, who is the man that has given up wealth?

Kh. A hermit. Will my pay be increased by this blow?

Dus. Your pate will be. So, he is a hermit's son-in-law?

Kh. A hermit can have no daughter, and, *a fortiori*, no son-in-law.

Dus. My head aches. Fool, explain.

Kh. The daughter was born and married before the father became a hermit.

Dus. Was the father known to me?

Kh. I think so, unless you admit that you were in the habit of carrying your eyes in your pocket whenever you went to the palace.

Dus. Is it the King then ?

Kh. Yes. I would have answered you so long ago, if your Lordship had only asked me that plainly.

Dus. What did he become a hermit for ?

Kh. His glass, it seems, played false and decapitated him.

Dus. Who is to rule the land ?

Kh. He who will rule his daughter, or rather, he who will be ruled by the daughter. For, this latter is now the usual state of things.

Dus. Tell me then, who is the King's son-in-law ?

Kh. Yours, my Lord.

Dus. Mine ?

Kh. Yours and the King's is all one, and yet you are not the King.

Dus. Take this for your pains (*striking*). Get out of my sight.

Kh. I will, and yet I think the sight of Chandrahása will make your heart glad. [Exit.]

Dus. Has Chandrahása then married Champakamálini and been crowned King ? Adieu, sweet hopes ! What was Madana, that ass of a son, doing all day long in the palace ?

Enter CHANDRAHÁSA and CHAMPAKAMÁLINI.

Chand. and Champ. We humbly implore your blessing.

Dus. Chandrahása, you did not well to disobey my injunction as to worshipping Chandika this evening, in accordance with family custom.

Chand. Pardon me, dear father. I was on my way thither, when Madana stopped me under orders from the King, took the materials of worship from me, promised to perform it himself, and went to the temple. I rode his pony and went to the Palace; and you see what has happened since.

Dus. You may go. Farewell.

[*Exeunt* CHAND. and CHAMP.]

Has then my son gone to be slaughtered there
By hirelings who expect my gold and smiles?
A while ago, I fancied all my schemes
Were on the road successfully to fare.
Do they recoil upon my head at last?
And must these eyes look on my sole heir dead?
Still will I hope 'gainst hope. For now, as once,
Pity perchance has stopped the assassins' hands.

Enter the GHOST of MADANA.

Lo, here he comes. Sure 'tis my Madana.
Welcome though thou canst never rule the land.

How glad am I to see thee safely home,
Through pitchy darkness, all alone. Good son,
A moment since my heart was near to break,
Dreaming of bloody knives hurled at thy throat.
More welcome art thou at this hour to me
Than is a long lost husband to his wife.
Come, sit by me. See here is place for thee.
Why speak'st thou not ? I see thee ope thy lips.
Hast thou no power of utterance, gentle youth ?
Oh torture not thine aged father so.
What mean those looks of woe, those gory locks ?
What signifies that cord around thy waist,
Which shakes and shakes, and is allowed no rest ?
Ah ! Is thy soul some Devil's prisoner now ?
Art thou my son ? And is it come to this ?
Dost thou beg me to liberate thee soon ?
Alas ? Who makes, can seldom heal a wound.
Why dost thou point thy finger at thy throat
And then at me in turns ? Prithee, do not,
Oh do not wring my heart in such a fashion.
I must plead guilty for my having given
My ruling passion freedom uncontrolled.
I shudder now that shuddered ne'er before,
Because thy ghastly form preys on my heart.
Oh leave me, do, and to thy shades return ;
For, as it is, I live upon the rack. [Exit GHOST.

Now is the apparition slowly gone,
And I begin to gain my feeble breath.
But what was it I saw ? Was it the Devil,
Ranging about for evil purposes,
Which, as they say, takes any form it likes
To plague mankind ? It can't be ; for it has
No force upon the twice-born. Was't a man ?
A flesh and blood reality ? And may
It have a beating pulse ? If so, why did
It answer not a word when it was asked ?
Can laws explain phenomena like these ?
Yes, I suppose they can. For well we know
A troubled brain begets strange phantasies.
Was ever mind more ruffled than is mine ?
I being unasked, a good King quits the throne.
A stripling reigns 'gainst whom I plotted deep,
Two high-born beauties dallying in his arms.
My son's not yet returned from Chandi's fane.
These are enough to make a man go mad.
But I'll be sure whether the sight I saw
Was not the offspring of my troubled brain.
Kharaka, come in.

Enter KHARAKA.

Kh. I attend your Lordship's pleasure.

Dus. Were you watching outside ?

Kh. Yes, my Lord. Not a fly could escape my notice.

Dus. Did any thing come in and go out of this room a short time ago ?

Kh. I saw two things do so.

Dus. Two *things* ? What are they ?

Kh. One was visible ; the other was not.

Dus. Indeed ? Your answer makes confusion worse confounded. Visible and invisible ? That is just the point. Did you see Madana come to me just now ?

Kh. No one can see Madana come to anybody.

Dus. Why, you blockhead ?

Kh. He is invisible.

Dus. You must have seen him this afternoon at least.

Kh. No, my Lord. He has been invisible ever since Shiva consumed him by the fire from his third eye.¹⁾ All his mischief is now done on the electric principle, working between eye and eye, heart and heart.

Dus. Your humour is out of tune now, and you will repent for it. Did you see my son ?

Kh. No, my Lord.

Dus. What then were the two things, visible and invisible, that you saw come and go ?

¹⁾ Madana is also a name of the Hindu Cupid. The Puránas say that once when Shiva was engaged in his devotions, the God of Love ventured to exert his power upon him. This so provoked Shiva that Cupid was at once reduced to ashes.

Kh. I shall first go to the door, sir, before beginning to answer. It was—pardon me for once. It was—light and air. [Exil

Dus. Were I in spirits, thou wouldst have paid dear For this unseasonable wit of thine.
But who can say, if ere tomorrow's mist
Is chased off by the golden-featured Sun,
Things may not take a turn such as no man
Could dream before? My son, how dost thou fare?
I'll go now to the shrine of Chandika,
And be convinced if bliss or woe's my share. [Exil.

Scene II. *Kuntala.—A Burning Ground, near
Chandikā's Temple.*

Enter Two DEVILS.

1st Devil. Fierce Kalkuda, thou Devils' chief!
What mortals have I brought to grief!
The mother of a new-born child
I hid within a jungle wild.
I fed her there a week on meat
Which I procured from butchers' street.
Her infant's life now seems extinct,
But soon again to body linked,
Through my resistless agency.
Her husband finds he cannot be

A scoffer still, and offers now
Two full-grown cocks. But where wert thou ?

2nd Devil. Upon a Bráhma's leafy dish,
At meal, I meant to drop a fish.

A fisher's daughter caught me thieving,
And aimed a blow at me while leaving.

I turned a fire and burnt her coat ;

I turned a wind and sank the boat

Her sire had taken to the sea.

Then came I hither, seeking thee,

But only found a job instead.

1st Devil. What ? Man or beast ? Living or dead ?

2nd Devil. The spirit of a youth of note,
The steam from whose warm blood doth float
E'ven now in Chandi's edifice.

A death from violence being his,

We'll keep him as our prisoner long,

To squeeze out offerings from among

His kin, unless our deity

Will wrest him from our custody.

1st Devil. A ghost ! A ghost ! This lucky date

We duly will commemorate

With singing, dancing, revelry,

Until the stars pale in the sky.

But who is he comes towards this place ?

Look how despair stares in his face !

His hair dishevelled stands like reeds ;
He treads on thorns and stones, and bleeds.
Look how he stumbles ! How he rises !
Ah ! See how nothing him surprises !
There lies red rice, with long wicks burning ;
A corpse is here to ashes turning.
Oh here, on this cremation-ground,
To live a cursed life we're bound.
Sure must this man's ill-deeds be great,
Since his is worse than Devils' state.

and Devil. Ah ! Dreadful ! See, he plucks a brand
Out of a pyre, comes where we stand.
Oh 'tis the father of the youth
We hold in thrall. He comes, in truth,
In search of his new-murdered son.

Grief makes him furious. Let us run. [*Exeunt DEVILS.*

Enter DUSHTABUDDHI into the temple with a fire-brand.

Dus. Fly hope ! for here he lies. (*Throws away the brand.*)

Be blind my eyes,

That see this scion of my house cut down.
Son, dost thou welter in thy blood, now cold,
And stiffening this thy moustache and thy hair ?
Here hast thou thrown the golden plate with flowers
That should have mounted on the Goddess' head.
O child, my dearest child, here have I come ;
Do speak to me, and stint not thus thy words.

Arise! Arise! Shouldst thou not rule the land?
What did the King tell thee that I should do?
Inform me this at length, and be not still.
See, here is Chandrahás come with a note.
Go, wed him to thy sister; and do thou
Exhaust my treasure in bestowing alms.
Be not offended that I railed at thee.
O son, the world proclaims thy gentleness,
Thy love of gods, of parents, priests and all.
Can such a one fall by a treacherous hand?
Was I the foe that caused thy butchering?
There is a moral in it. For it is
Fit retribution for my breach of trust.
When good Kulinda did commit his son
Unto my care, did I not him assure,
He should not be worse treated than my son?
And certainly my son has now been treated
Just as I wished to treat great Chandrahás.
Son, wak'st thou not? And have not these my tears,
That bathe thy body wet, the power to raise
Thee from the noiseless sleep enthralling thee?
Ah! Life can now possess no charms for me.
Adieu, thou world of tumult, shame and grief.
I'll dash my brains against the pillars hard
That prop the roof. O Death! come thou apace. [*Dies.*]

Scene III. *Kuntaka*.—A Room in the King's Palace.

CHANDRAHÁSA discovered saying his morning Prayers.

Enter a PRIEST.

Priest. Will you tell me where the new King is?

Chand. Why, where should he be but here in the palace?
What is your business with him?

Priest. You seem to be a very impertinent fellow, wanting me to tell you what is only for the Monarch's ears.

Chand. I mean no offence to you, sir. If you tell me what you came for, the King will know it.

Priest. You are a very presumptuous man. Are you a new importation? If King Chandrahása is to be judged of by your behaviour, he will occupy a very low place in my estimation.

Chand. He must be very sorry to hear it. But if you don't mean to explain yourself to me, the object of your coming here will be frustrated.

Priest. Do you mean that you won't announce me? Well then, I want to see the face of the King.

Chand. He is not more handsome than myself, I assure you.

Priest. A servant as vain as you are, will not do credit to his master. What will become of you, if the King should hear your opinion about his countenance and figure?

Chand. I have his permission. But tell me what good will a look at his face do you ?

Priest. Don't you know that the Shástras say that if you see a cow's tail, a fox's head, and a King's face early in the morning, you will have success in your undertakings the whole day ?

Chand. But there is a proverb which says that a King's eyes, as well as a horse's hind legs, should be avoided.

Priest. Proverbs are not Shástras ; and nothing affects a Bráhmaṇ but what is stated in the Shástras.

Chand. Your opinion is most comforting and convenient. What do the Shástras say will be the effect of any one seeing a Bráhmaṇ early in the morning ?

Priest. "Wealth, grains, cattle, numerous sons, and the happiness of being a centenarian."

Chand. If so many blessings can flow from my having looked at you now, wish them all to me, and let me at once tell you that I am King Chandrahása.

Priest. (*Trembling.*) Is it possible ?

Chand. Be not startled, sir.

Priest. I humbly implore your Highness' pardon.

Chand. You have not offended me.

Priest. I would, however, give your Highness one advice. To prevent others from being deceived like myself, you must behave more like a King.

Chand. What do you find me deficient in ?

Priest. I may be wrong. But I will state my mind to your Highness. No one deserves to be called a King who is out of his bed before nine o'clock in the morning.

Chand. Thank you for this suggestion.

Priest. I have something else to inform your Highness. If you are not at leisure now, I can come another time.

Chand. I am ready to hear you now.

Priest. Before the Sun's red-visaged charioteer
Began to peep from yonder eastern hills,
Alone I went to Chandi's edifice,
To do my daily worship at her shrine.
There lo ! most shocking sights did I behold.
The Premier and his son lie there both dead.
What strange mischance could lead to this event
E'en on your Highness' coronation day,
I cannot say. But ugly doth it look.

Chand. You do amaze me. Why, Sir, did you not
Say this to me at once ? Alas ! Alas !
Because I looked thus early on your face,
Must I prepare my wretched eyes to meet
Such a heart-rending spectacle ? Alas !
My legs begin to fail me. Yet I'll walk
Towards the temple straight. O misery !

[*Exeunt.*]

Scene IV. *Kuntala.—Chandiká's Temple.*

Enter CHANDRAHÁSA, GÁLAVA and followers.

Chand. O Káli,¹⁾ from the Snowy Mountains sprung,
Thou bride elect of the five-headed God,²⁾
We here invoke thy blessing and thy aid.
Ere yet the worlds had budded into life,
When all that was, was one chaotic flood
Upon whose breast the great Primeval Cause,
Vishnu, was taking his delicious rest,
And two huge demons, whom his ears produced,
Leaped forth to swallow up the Navel-born,³⁾
'Twas thou to whom the humbled Brahma prayed,
And prayed too with effect. When later on,
Gigantic Mahisha had proved a source
Of untold mischief to the universe,
The gods, in solemn synod, met in heaven,
And worked themselves into a rage, whose glow,
Coupled with thine inherent essences,
Gave thee a most tremendous form, which saved
Awe-stricken mortals from the dangerous one.
The valorous Shumbha and Nishumbha brave
Have felt the matchless prowess of thine arms,

1) A name for the goddess Chandi.

2) Shiva.

3) Brahma.

Seen, with dismay, their blood-born¹⁾ forces sink,
And paid dear for their ill-deeds with their lives.
'Twas but thy will and energy divine
That out of nothingness did forge the worlds
Which float in this immensity of space,
Through countless ages, with varieties
Of substance, color, sound, condition, name,
And which, though nothing but a juggler's trick,
Is made the source of feelings numberless,
Of joys and smiles, of griefs and bitter tears.
A frail man I, I'm not above my kind,
And can't restrain this flow from my weak eyes.
I do not know why thou didst deem it well
That this event should happen as it did.
But I am forced to treat it as a curse
Inflicted on me for my sins, a stain
Upon my reputation. 'Tis for this
That, with a humble heart, I here approach.
Descend, O mighty Goddess, from thy throne,
And deign to look where these two worthies lie.
A deathbed, such as this, they ne'er deserved.
'They were my friends. But were they not thine too ?
I like it not that the auspicious day
On which I married and was crowned king

1) Each drop of blood of a slain soldier, allowed to fall on the earth, was supposed to produce a host of fresh warriors.

Should witness shedding of the precious blood
Of my dear father and his dearer son.
But dost thou like it that, on such a day,
Murder should lay low this good Madana
Whose latest errand was to worship thee ?
Or thus that Dushtabuddhi should expire,
Whose piety directed such thy worship ?
And thinkst thou no discredit falls on thee
That two such men should perish in thy house ?
But why appeal to sentiments like these ?
I am thy firm adorer. Let them live !
Thou art a mighty Goddess. Let them live ! [A pause.]
Gál. Good King, great Chandi seems not to comply.
Perhaps these men deserved they thus should die.
Chand. Well, let it be. I value not my life,
If I must miss these dearest friends for ever.
O worthy sage, prepare a holy fire,
E'en in this place. Unto dread Chandiká,
I'll sacrifice my body bit by bit. (The curtain falls.)

Scene V. Kuntala.—An apartment in the King's Palace.

CHAMPAKAMÁLINI discovered sleeping.

Champ. Go, run and bring them here. Even an ant's life
is worth preserving. What ? What ? (Suddenly awaking
and sitting upon the bed and rubbing the eyes.)

My Lord! My Lord! Oh what a scene I saw!
Dear Chandrahás, my master, where art thou?
He is not here. Can he be up so soon?
Vilásini, come here.

Enter VILÁSINI.

Vil. Most noble Queen!
I do attend your pleasure.

Champ. Dost thou know
Where my dear husband is?

Vil. At break of day,
Just as he had arisen, bathed and said
His prayers, a meagre-looking Bráhma came,
And told him that in Chandi's sacred fane,
The minister and his young son were both
Found dead, and weltering in their own blood. Straight
Our noble master started for the place.

Champ. This news alarms me. Ah! How it accords
With what was just now passing in my head?
Vilásini, I too will thither hie.
Come thou with me.

[*Exeunt.*

Scene VI. *Kuntala.—Chandiká's Temple.*

CHANDRAHÁSA, GÁLAVA and others found assembled;

GÁLAVA prepares a sacrificial fire.

Chand. Now glorious Agni, thou Consumer great,
Thou the sole Mouth through which the deathless gods

Can feed themselves, we have invited thee
To come to this place on a grave event.
The Goddess wills that my unworthy self
Shall quit the earth, with these my relatives,
For unseen worlds. Be thou my vehicle ;
And speedy be thy work.

1 Subject. Alas ! Alas !

Why have we lived to see this woeful day ?

2 Subject. Is Kuntala become a desert now ?

Is there no wise man to dissuade the king
From this dire act ? Will you give up, good King,
The sacred duty of protecting us ?
And will you leave us to our fate ? Your death
Will surely be a signal for our own.

Chand. My loyal subjects, shed no tears for me.
My reign was famous only for these deaths.
To me, the loss of these my dear colleagues,
Also the thought of when and how they died,
Would be far worse than death. Then, for my sake,
Restrain your grief, and try to be content.

Enter VISHAYÁ, weeping.

Good Vishayá, a period is now come
Unto our short-lived love. May Chandiká,
To whom this body shall be offered up
With those of thy good sire and brother here,

Give strength of mind to thee in thy most sad
Bereavement.

Vish. O my God! my God! my God!
How soon thou makest one to laugh and weep
In quick succession! 'Twas but yesterday
I felt myself the happiest girl on earth.
And now I'm the most wretched thing alive.
O father, dost thou lie so humble there?
Thou on whose single word, the destiny
Of this whole empire did depend? And are
Those lips now cold which should have called me darling?
And asked me what it is doth make me sad?
Dear brother, Madana, what cruel hand
Can thus have laid thee low? Why am I not
Struck blind that see thy body hacked down thus?
Wert thou so good, so mild, and so beloved,
Because Fate meant to give the intensest grief
To all, by slaughtering thee thus out of time?
How desolate we'll find the house to be
Missing thy presence! Fate is cruel indeed,
Fate that can bring in two such deaths at once.
But Chandrahás, my bosom's Lord, I feel
Thou art more cruel e'en than Fate. Thou wouldst
Increase my miseries, and bring about
A woe to crush me to the ground. Dear Lord,

If thou wilt put to practice thy resolve,
I pray thee to despatch me previously.

Chand. Dear Vishayá, think not I feel less pain
In leaving thee, than thou dost at the thought
Of losing me. But live I can no more.
I fear these deaths most clearly do imply
Disapprobation of my marriage late
With Champaká, and my new dignity,
Of which, I dare say, thou hast heard already.
My peace of mind is gone; and I believe,
My good name is gone too. My Vishayá,
Prevail not on me to survive this wreck,
Or to add guilt to all my other griefs.
Now come, my sword, thou terror of my foes;
Different by far shall now thy office be.

(Lifting up his sword against his own neck.)

Enter CHAMPAKAMÁLINI with haste and seizes the sword.

Champ. Forbear, forbear to shed thine own life-blood.
The Goddess can relieve a puzzled mind
In thousand different ways we cannot guess.
If thou canst but command a moment's patience
To lend thine ear unto my tale, I hope . . .
You will not feel the time has run to waste.
My Lord, the haste with which I hither ran
May prove of some advantage to us all.

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